

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Alexander "Alec" Beck, 78, retired seaman and fire captain

"You got to live, eh? You got to eat, eh? So, was all right. But I couldn't see a life as a seaman. I rather be on land. But you go where there was job. You get tired of the job. You on the same ship, doing the same thing over and over. . . . I was sports minded. That's why I rather stay on land."

Alexander "Alec" Beck, Caucasian-Hawaiian, was born on Kaili Street in Kalihi on September 17, 1906. His father, a construction superintendent in downtown Honolulu, was an Irishman. His mother was Hawaiian-English.

Alec took on a number of odd jobs while growing up. He gathered kiawe beans to sell to local dairies, worked in a Kalihi pineapple cannery, and caddied at Moanalua Golf Club. In 1922, Alec became a member of the first Kalihi Thundering Herd barefoot football team.

After attending Kalihi-Waena School, Iolani School, and McKinley High School, he graduated in 1926. He then worked as a welder for Honolulu Iron Works. During slack periods, Alec worked as an oiler, wiper, water tender, and fireman on Inter-Island, Matson, and Dollar Line ships.

In 1933, Alec joined the fire department, attaining the rank of captain before retiring in 1965.

Today, he lives in Kahala with his wife, the former Annabelle Vida. They have three sons. He still owns rental property in Kalihi.

Tape No. 11-44-1-84

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Alexander Beck (AB)

March 15, 1984

Kahala, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Alec Beck. Today is March 15, 1984 and we're at his home in Kahala.

Okay, Mr. Beck, can you tell where you were born and when you were born?

AB: I was born in Kalihi on September 17, 1906 (at 1138 Kaili Street).

WN: And what was your father doing at that time?

AB: My father was general superintendent of the Honolulu Planing Mill, which was situated at the end of Fort Street which now is the Aloha Tower Park and all within that area, the Irwin estate. But this was under the Charles Lucas Estate and they owned the planing mill. Was a lumber mill and they had lumberyard and stuff there.

WN: Exactly where on Fort Street was that?

AB: It was at the bottom of Fort and now it's Nimitz Highway, just below where H.H. Hackfeld is situated. That's American Factors now. It was right on that corner.

WN: The name of it was Honolulu Planing Mill?

AB: Honolulu Planing Mill owned by the Lucas family--Charles Lucas family.

WN: What kind of work did he do exactly?

AB: He was a general superintendent in charge of all the mill works, construction and different woodworking things. You know, making doors, making windows, coffins, and anything made by lumber was made by this milling company.

WN: Your father was Irish?

AB: Yeah, he was pure-blooded Irish from Ireland. Cork County, Ireland.

WN: Did he come directly from Ireland to Hawaii?

AB: No, as far as I know, he came in with twenty-two carpenters from San Francisco on a contract to build a Lihue Mill. They built the old Tripler Hospital which was on Moanalua Road up where Fort Shafter is now. They built Queen's Hospital, the first big wing in Queen's Hospital. But they came down on a group with a contract. So their first job was Lihue Mill on Kauai.

WN: Do you know what year he came to Hawaii?

AB: Gee, no. I wouldn't be able to answer. My sister would be.

WN: And what about your mother? What was she?

AB: My mother was born down at Kahaluu. That's on the other side of the island. And then she went to the St. Andrew's Priory. And then graduated from St. Andrew's Priory--gee, I really don't know. My sister would be able to answer that, what class that. It was St. Andrew's Priory. See, they only went up to about tenth grade, I think.

WN: And what nationality was she?

AB: She was Hawaiian-English.

WN: So, half Hawaiian, half English?

AB: Well, I couldn't say whether it's half or. . . . You ask my sister. She would know more about that.

WN: Your father purchased property?

AB: Yeah, my dad purchased a property on Kaili and Beckley, and we moved up there into a big house and stuff.

WN: How big was the property?

AB: The property on Kaili and Beckley was 18,000 square feet. There was a barn there and a big house.

WN: So, you grew up on this corner then? Beckley and Kaili?

AB: Yeah, I grew up on Beckley and Kaili.

WN: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

AB: I had two brothers and three sisters.

WN: So six of you altogether?

AB: Six in the family. And living now is only me and my sister, Mary McMillan.

WN: What number were you?

AB: I was the youngest (number six).

WN: And Mary was. . . .

AB: Mary was number three. She was number three.

WN: So, as you were growing up in that area, Kaili and Beckley, what kind of things did you do to have a good time?

AB: Well, (chuckles) there's no such thing as good time. We had to struggle, eh? Because my dad died when I was nine years old. So, we had to struggle. I mean, what came up, what happened in the parks was our enjoyment in sports and everything that we had. There wasn't much you can say about it. We'd go down to the old Moanalua Golf Club to caddy. Those days, the caddy was twenty-five cents a round, nine holes. It's still nine holes at Moanalua Golf Club. So, that's where we made our extra money, going down there and caddy.

WN: How old were you when you first started caddying?

AB: Oh, about (fifteen) years.

WN: Twenty-five cents a round. How many rounds in one day?

AB: Four rounds. One dollar. (Chuckles) That's thirty-six holes.

WN: Yeah. Oh, one dollar a day, that's not . . .

AB: Not bad, yeah? But you don't get it all the time.

WN: That Kaili and Beckley, that's near the Kalihi Corner, eh?

AB: No. Kalihi Corner was (three) blocks below. Let's see. We're on the corner Kaili and Beckley, and Kalihi Corner was on Kaili and King Street, North King Street. That was a whole corner there.

WN: Did you hang around that corner?

AB: Oh, yeah. That was our hangout corner there. Plus the park.

WN: The Fernandez Park?

AB: Yeah. They called it Fernandez Park. Some called it Fernandez, some called it Kalihi-Waena Park. So, old man Fernandez, E.K. Fernandez, Sr. stayed right across the park. They had a big home there. The Fernandez family was staying there.

WN: So, you used to hang around the corner. Like what did you do?

AB: Well, (chuckles) hang around the corner like anyplace. That's the

only recreation. Well, we'd go down. Sit down, talk, you know. Outside of that, nothing. Sometimes we'd go down, catch crab. Like Saturdays or holidays, you know. Go down to the railroad track which is Nimitz Highway now. They had railroad track. There was no road going through there then. So, we'd go down and catch crabs. Pass time away. Or go over to where Sand Island. Sand Island, there was a mud flat, too. We go over there, catch crabs. You can walk from where Pier 40 and all that, right over to Sand Island when it's low tide. So, that's our pastime. Go down there, catch crabs when you want or stuff like that. Because Kalihi Kai was nothing but kiawe bushes and all coral.

WN: How you used to catch crab in those days?

AB: Oh, with nets. Sometimes, with a little line and the nets. You know, put bait on the end of the line, throw it over. The crabs would bite. We pull 'em up and then we use a hand net to catch crab. Or we'd use the other round crab nets and throw 'em over the side. We had one, two, three--three bridges that we'd catch off of that, see. Because the water from Moanalua Gardens will have to come through, and the railroad built bridges there so the water can go through from their river to the outside of the ocean.

WN: So, the bridges you see off Nimitz Highway, that was actually built by the railroad?

AB: Ah, yeah, some of the bridges. The ones by the railroad track. Yeah, those were the original bridges till they built up the Nimitz Highway.

WN: And then, the railroad tracks, where did it go from?

AB: It went from Honolulu right to Ewa, then it went as far as Kahuku. We used to go down get pineapple. And then they had passenger trains that went to Ewa. Then one would go all the way to Kahuku town. From Honolulu to Kahuku town.

WN: Where was the starting point in Honolulu?

AB: Was right on Iwilei and King. The station is still there. Railroad station is still there.

WN: So, you used to go crabbing. What else?

AB: Well, (chuckles) nothing. We'd go hiking, too. We'd go up in Kalihi Valley or go in Aiea Valley. Go hiking with the gang. Tomorrow we go hiking. So, pack up, go down the mountains just to see what's what up in Kalihi Valley. What they call Kilohana now and all that, you know.

WN: It was called what?

AB: Kilohana.

WN: Kilohana?

AB: Yeah. That's up in the valley there.

WN: What was that? Kilohana?

AB: That's the name of the place. See, and now they cut that new highway through it. They went through the tunnel. That was part of the place we used to go up to look. Up in the valley.

WN: They had couple swimming holes, yeah, up there, too?

AB: Yeah, they had two swimming holes. One, we used to call the (Tin Roof Shack). Kilohana. They used to measure the flow of the water that comes down. They had a station there that took care the stream water that flowed down there, and they had another swimming pool. I wouldn't know the name now. Then, they had another swimming pool in the back of the Kalihi-Waena School.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: What was your father like?

AB: What do you mean, what he was like? He was a good provider and a good father, as long as he was alive.

WN: Was he quiet? Talkative?

AB: Oh, no. He was a big Irishman, and he liked his beer and stuff like that. No, quite a quiet guy. Maybe a few beers, he'd talk a little.

(AB's granddaughter enters. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, what school did you go to first?

AB: I went to Kalihi-Waena. Kalihi-Waena was a school up there then, you see. I went from the first grade to the eighth grade in Kalihi-Waena School.

WN: What you thought of school?

AB: Well, (chuckles) school, those days, you had to go through. Well, was good. I always saying these [today's] kids can go further than high school into college, it all depends. They need all that education. We went up there. As long as you came out eighth grade was all right, eh? Then, from there, I went to Iolani School for one year, then from then I went to McKinley. But I was going to school and trying to make money and everything. Was really rough, those days. Pineapple cannery didn't hire too many people. So, we had to go around pick up beans, sell beans--the kiawe beans for the cattle and

all. One big bag like that, twenty-five cents.

WN: Who did you sell to?

AB: To the feed people. Honolulu Feed. After that was Honolulu Dairymen's. They used to come around and buy these beans. They'd give us the bag. [We] fill the bag up, and they come around once a week to buy the kiawe beans from us. So, that's how we made some extra money.

WN: How long did it take you to fill up one bag?

AB: Well, it all depends how many beans fell down (chuckles) from the tree. We'd go up there, shake the tree and when fell down.

WN: Oh, just the beans?

AB: Yeah, the kiawe beans. Oh, they're about that long and about that wide.

WN: Six inches long . . .

AB: Oh, all depends. Some six, some eight. Generally, six inches long. And we'd have to wait till they get ripe. They won't fall off the tree when they're green. So, only the certain time of the year, they have that.

WN: The money you made, did you give it to your parents?

AB: Oh, what I made, I gave to my mother. Because, like I said, my dad died, and I think she got some kind of pension which was not too much. She had to take care six of us. So, my sister, and then my brother and them went to work. My brother went to work under my dad down at planing mill.

WN: Where did your sister work?

AB: She worked for the railroad company. Oahu Railway and Land Company. She was secretary. My other sister went into teaching, then she got married. She never did continue teaching. My other brother was a foreman with the City and County mechanic shop. My brother, oldest brother, was a foreman. He was a quartermaster down at the Navy Yard with the public works. Buildings and all this. He was in charge of that. My other sister was housewife.

WN: You said that you went to Iolani for one year. How did that come about?

AB: Well, (chuckles) I don't know. I just went to Iolani. My sister paid for my tuition and I went there. Then, after that, following year, I went to McKinley. Going to Iolani, I think, was six dollars a month. That's about fifty bucks a year. That's plenty money.

WN: Your mother was a St. Andrew's . . .

AB: Yeah, graduate.

WN: . . . Priory graduate.

AB: Yeah, St. Andrew's Priory graduate.

WN: Where was Iolani at the time?

AB: Iolani was right where the St. Andrew's Cathedral is. On the right side. The old building is torn down, but they have some other building. It was right across Richards and Beretania Street. Right alongside Washington Place. There was a road that went in and they had this school building there, plus this big stone building. It was Iolani School. See, that comes under the St. Andrew's Episcopalian Church.

WN: So, you didn't like Iolani?

AB: Well, sports there, we only played junior football. So, no. Then I went to McKinley the following year.

WN: And you graduated in. . . .

AB: [Nineteen] twenty-six.

WN: Did you have any jobs before you graduated?

AB: No, or like I said, what job we can find. You know, trying to look for vacation time, like that. I used to go clean yard, make few dollars a week. And that's the only thing. Outside of that, there was nothing. You couldn't go look for work.

WN: Did you work at the cannery at all?

AB: Only one year. One year I worked at the old Thomas Pineapple Cannery which was up at Kalihi. It's not there anymore. I made five cents an hour as tray boy. (Chuckles) So, you worked ten hours a day. That's including Sunday and all. Then you'd have lunch and one drink. That's fifteen cents--three hours gone.

(Laughter)

WN: Was that less than what Hawaiian Pine and Libby's was paying?

AB: Oh, I wouldn't know. I never worked for them. Was only for Thomas Pineapple Cannery which was on Industrial--now, we call Industrial Street and Wilcox Lane, all that. The cannery was situated there.

WN: Kalihi Kai?

AB: Well, it's just below King Street. I'd say, about quarter mile below King. It was between (Kalihi Street) and the stream. See, the Kalihi Stream.

WN: Was it a lot smaller than the Hawaiian Pine?

AB: Oh, yeah. Was a small cannery. It was a small cannery. Yeah, because after that was the Libby's. Well, Libby's was a big cannery. And Libby's, had one down where my aunts and uncles stayed down at Kahaluu. They had a cannery there. Old Libby's cannery down at St. John's By The Sea now. Kahaluu. That's over the other side of the island. Then that went out. They closed it up. They all moved to Kalihi Kai where they had the Libby cannery. Now it's closed.

WN: That was Iwilei, eh?

AB: No. That's Kalihi Kai. Iwilei was the Hawaiian Pine and the CPC. The California Packing Corporation.

WN: So, Kalihi Kai had Libby's and Thomas?

AB: Kalihi Kai, Libby's and they had a Chinese cannery next to Libby's. Pineapple cannery. Yeah, I can't think of the name. But Thomas wasn't down at Kalihi Kai. It was just below King Street. So, you couldn't say too much that it was Kalihi Kai. Well, below King Street. See, we had a big poi factory there, and it was below the poi factory.

WN: Who owned the Thomas Pineapple Cannery?

AB: Chee, that I can't answer. I really don't know who owned that. But somebody interested in canning pineapples, eh? So, that was there.

WN: How long did you work over there?

AB: One year.

WN: While you were going school?

AB: Yeah. I mean, no, during summer when I was . . .

WN: Summer?

AB: Yeah. I was up at the Kalihi-Waena School. We went down there and the guy asked if we want to work. So, we went in. Four of us went to work. Tray boy.

WN: How old were you that time?

AB: Chee, that time, was around about, oh, (thirteen), I think.. Outside of going to Moanalua to caddy, if we can, you know. Moanalua, I'd make more money. (Chuckles)

WN: So, you were caddy, and then when you were younger you used to pick up beans. Then you did yard work. And you worked in the cannery. Anything else when you were young?

AB: No, that's all I could think of. That time. Where else you going? You haven't got money and stuff. Things are kind of rough, you know. We struggled and made what we can and lucky to live the life we lived.

WN: So, how did you get involved in sports in Kalihi?

AB: Well, in Kalihi-Waena we were in sports and football there. And then, basketball wasn't too great then. So, was only football. And we'd play between different schools, like Kaiulani. We'd play Kaiulani in those days. And maybe three big schools this side, see? So, that was the only sport we had.

WN: In Kalihi-Waena?

AB: In the grammar schools, yeah.

WN: And then, you played for the Kalihi Thundering Herd?

AB: Yeah, I played one year. And then I helped Benny Waimau, and Julian Judd and them to help coach the team after that. Because when I played for McKinley, I couldn't play for the Kalihi Thundering Herd. Because the first time they started they was under, I think, the Wilson Sporting Goods sponsored that. Till after that, then they came under Spalding. Then they formed the Spalding League. The Spalding League was connected with E.O. Hall & Son. They were sporting goods. Then Wilson, I think, was Davies & Co., but I'm not sure.

WN: And Spalding was connected with who?

AB: E.O. Hall & Son. They had sports, they had . . .

WN: E.O. . . .

AB: Hall.

WN: Hall & Son.

AB: Was right on Fort and King. South King Street. Right on Fort. On the Waikiki side of Fort Street.

WN: How did you get involved in the Thundering Herd?

AB: Well, we all played. We started there, we played football. That's all, so we started a football gang up there.

WN: Who started it?

AB: Manuel DeCorte. He was a teacher at the Kalihi-Waena School. He was in the shop. Instructor in teaching carpentry, planting, and everything. He was mostly the shop teacher. Taught us how to do carpentry plus plant around. He was sports minded, so he started this Kalihi-Waena School team. Then after that, was the Kalihi Thundering Herd.

WN: Lot of the kids that played for Kalihi Thundering Herd played for the Kalihi-Waena grammar team?

AB: No. Some of them never played football for schools and they came up there, played around there. No. The majority which was living around there, sure, then they played for the Kalihi Thundering Herd, but you had friends come in that they played for the gang up there. Because some went to Kaiulani School, but they came up to play because Palama never had a barefoot league till they started later on. Then Palama came in. So, that's when they took different guys. Like up Kalihi Valley, Kalihi Kai, and all the guys from Moanalua all came to play for Kalihi Thundering Herd. Within that area plus what friends you had.

WN: What year did you play?

AB: In 1922, I think.

WN: Barefoot football, what kind of equipment did you have?

AB: We had dungaree pants. We had our sweatshirt. No headgear. Use sailor hat. What we call the sailor hat, the white hat. Use that for headgear. No shoulder pads or nothing. (Chuckles) So, it's barefooted. Jeans plus our sweaters that we used.

WN: Did you get hurt a lot?

AB: Oh, well, we get whacked now and then, but (chuckles) you had to take lot of that, you know. And we had a good masseur by the name of Harvey Chilton. He took care our injuries. And we had Mitsu. . . . What's his name? He was a taxi driver, but he was a good massage man. So, he took care of the gang, the injuries we had.

WN: So, what--mostly bruises and charley horse . . .

AB: Bruises, yeah, charley horse. And, you know, cracks here and there. So, (chuckles) we had to take what we can---you know, football, we don't know whether they had fractured ribs or stuff like that. It hurt, we'd put one big plaster across.

WN: Where did you folks play your games?

AB: We'd play at like McKinley School, we play at different parks. And the championship game would be played at the old Moiliili [i.e., Honolulu] Stadium. That was on South King and Isenberg. That was

the old stadium. They played the championship games there. But in-between games, they play it at McKinley Field, and sometimes down at Palama Settlement, they had a field there. It all depends.

WN: Did you win that first year? Championship?

AB: Yeah, we won that year. Then, I think, when they opened up with the Spalding, I think they won that, too. That was in '26.

WN: So, you only played one year because you played for McKinley?

AB: Yeah. I couldn't play.

WN: What position did you play?

AB: McKinley, I played end. I played end, but I went back to punt. I was a kicker.

WN: Was McKinley good in those days?

AB: Well, average.

(Laughter)

AB: You know, you win some; lose some. The first championship, there was one in 1921. McKinley. That's [William] Doggie Wise and all that. Then they won in '23, but I got hurt. I couldn't play. So, I missed out on the championship team. Because those days, you had to make so many quarters to be eligible for a sweater and a medal, eh? You had to play four full quarters, which was fifteen minutes a quarter. And those days, if you go out in the first half, you don't come back till the second half. Not like nowadays. They alternate, you know. Take the guys over.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: So, when you graduated, what did you do?

AB: Well, (chuckles) first thing, you try look for a job. No jobs around. So, I finally got a job with [Honolulu] Iron Works working in the foundry. See, because we had couple of boys that was playing with the Kalihi Thundering Herd. They were molders, so they were building a mill. So, they told us come down and work as a molder's helper. So, that was my first job. I did jobs on and off. When the guys would want to do something, they may hire us for about a week. No jobs. Jobs were rough around . . .

WN: This is Honolulu Iron Works?

AB: Yeah.

WN: In Kakaako?

AB: In Kakaako. So, we worked there.

WN: They hired you on and off?

AB: No, they hired us. They were busy, then. And then, after a while, they were slack so we got laid off. So then, I worked on the ships.

WN: For who?

AB: For Matson Company. First I worked for the Inter-Island [Steam Navigation Co., Ltd.], to relieve as an oiler on one of the boats, Maunakea. And then, from then on, when the guy came back from sick leave, I was laid off. Weren't too many jobs around.

WN: You worked Matson first, right?

AB: No, Inter-Island. That's the Maunakea. Then, after that, I worked at Iron Works when I was slack. Then I would catch a boat, Matson. And I'd come back and work at Iron Works when they were busy. And go maybe about one year and they slack, so I'd work on the Dollar Line. Make the trips from . . .

WN: "Dollar Line"?

AB: Yeah. That's the U.S. Dollar Line. Old Man Dollar had boats that go from San Francisco, Seattle to Yokohama and all that.

WN: D-O-L-L. . . .

AB: A-R, yeah. That's the Dollar Line, so-called.

WN: How did you get that job?

AB: Oh, that's through Iron Works. We used to go on board the ship (to) work. And I'd ask the outside boatman that took all the jobs, you know, when they needed jobs. You'd ask if they had jobs on board. He'd let me know. So, I get on the boat, work four months. You get tired, get off. I worked for the Los Angeles Steamship Lines. Was good ships to work for. They had good boats. They go from here to Los Angeles and back.

WN: So, what connection did these jobs have to do with the Iron Works? Were you still employed by the Iron Works?

AB: No, no. You see, Iron Works, we used to go on board these boats when they have jobs to repair lot of things. So, Iron Works was one of the places that they came down and repair things on the ships. They go down Iron Works. I was working in the welding shop down there. We used to go on board these ships, work in the boiler room or stuff like that. Take the tubes out of the boilers, and all that. But then, like I said, if there's a job on board there, well, I'd take it if I wanted it.

WN: So, you'd go to wherever the boat went, then.

AB: Yeah. So, I mean, those days, a wiper would get forty-five dollars.
(Chuckles)

WN: Wiper? What's a wiper do?

AB: He does any kind of job. Wiper. Clean up, and scrub this and that. Then if you going to become a fireman, you made \$57.50. Fireman, you take care the boilers. Then, after that, you go to oiler. Oiler would take care the oil for your up and down reciprocating engines. Go up and you take care, the oilers there. But now, after that, when the turbines came in, there were easier jobs. Then water tender. Water tender would be the guy that takes care of the thing in the fire room, see. He and the fireman work together. He's the guy that watches your steam gauges and all that. Water tender. And water tender used to make \$72.50.

WN: This is per . . .

AB: Month. No overtime, nothing. Straight pay.

WN: What did you do? You didn't work all the time on the ship, right?

AB: No, no. I didn't. But if I come back and Iron Works is busy, I rather work on shore. I'd go back and work with Iron Works.

WN: But on the ship, what? You would work eight hours and then. . . .

AB: Well, you work four hours on, eight hours off if you fireman, oiler or water tender. But a wiper, you work for eight hours straight. Only on Sundays, you work four hours and you off. That's the only guys work eight hours. The rest, you work four hours on and eight hours off. That's your watches.

WN: So, all the companies, like Inter-Island, Matson, and L.A. Steamship (and Dollar Lines) . . .

AB: All the same.

WN: Same kind of jobs?

AB: All the pays were all the same.

WN: So, what's the farthest you went?

AB: Oh, to Manila. Yeah, and back. And L.A., and then up to New York, back again on boats. But like I said, I traveled by plane and I went around the world, and all that, you see. By plane.

WN: Oh, later on?

AB: Yeah. By boats, no. To New York and back.

WN: When you go to places like New York and Manila, how long would you stay at the place?

AB: It all depends. Sometimes you stay three days, four days. Sometimes, two days. See, like if we go to Manila, maybe three days or four days. All depends on what loading and what unload. It all depends on the cargo and stuff like that. So, that's how it goes on. Most of them, like when I was on the Monterey that goes to Australia and back, well, you hit Pago Pago. You there one day, go in the morning, you leave that afternoon. You go to Fiji in the morning. You leave that afternoon. New Zealand, you stay a day and a half. Then when you go to Australia, you stay about three days in Sydney. Then you go to Melbourne three days, then you come back to Sydney for about three days, and you come back home. So, they come in and they go, it all depends on the cargo and the passengers on board. Was mostly freight they take in and mail. That's where their money was. So, you don't stay too long.

WN: So, you were just young. You were about what? Eighteen, nineteen when you first started, eh?

AB: Well, no. When I worked over there, I was older than that. Because when I came out of high school, I was down Iron Works. Then I played football for Town Team. Then when they were slack, then, like I said, I'd catch a boat.

WN: So, what you thought of that job?

AB: Was all right. You (chuckles) got to live, eh? You got to eat, eh? So, was all right. But I couldn't see a life as a seaman. I rather be on land. But you go where there was job. You get tired of the job. You on the same ship, doing the same thing over and over. That's what I said, I was sports minded. That's why I rather stay on land. (Chuckles)

WN: What year did you play for the Town Team?

AB: [Nineteen] twenty-six was my first year. I played with Healani. Then I went from Healani to Town Team. Then I got hurt. Well, that's when they were going to work. So, '27, then I was working on the boats and I came back in '30. I played for them one season. You know, all depends if I'm in town. And if I'm on the boat, I don't play.

WN: Did you get homesick or anything like that?

AB: No. Never got homesick because, you know, you on the boat. You going to work, you going to live there till you land. You see guys. You get homesick, like in San Francisco and L.A. or up in Seattle like that, you bump into friends from Honolulu. So, you see them.

But like I said, that job, you on the boat, (chuckles) the same thing day in and day out.

WN: Okay. So, then in 1933 you joined the fire department?

AB: Yeah, well, in '32, I was working on the Los Angeles Line. And we took the City of Honolulu back. That was burnt here.

WN: That was burnt?

AB: Yeah. City of Honolulu caught fire right in the pier. So, we did a job. I know they called us back to work in the City of Honolulu. Build her up, they send 'em. They take her back. So, I went back with the City of Honolulu as an oiler. And she tied up in San Pedro.

WN: California?

AB: Yeah. Then we went on a trip to nowhere. That's for about five days. You go down along the Mexican coast. They stop but nobody goes off of the ship. Then they turn around and come back. So when they came back, they tied. But then I took in the Olympic games. In '32.

WN: L.A.?

AB: Yeah. I had friends from Kalihi, from Palama, were staying in L.A., were working for the markets and different jobs up there. So they told me, "Oh, stay over." So I stayed over (three) weeks. Then I caught the boat Monterey. But I was there for the whole Olympic games. You know, all the sports within the Coliseum. They had swimming, they had track. Then down at the lagoon over there, they had barge racing. So, we had three boys from Honolulu swimming in the Olympics. Were the two Kalili brothers. They were swimming for Los Angeles team. And Buster Crabbe was swimming for another team. So we borrowed their jackets. So, we go in all the sports free.

(Laughter)

WN: Whose jackets you borrowed? The swimmers?

AB: The swimmers. Kalili brothers. Manuela and Maiola. So, they'd lend us the jackets, so we'd go right through. They don't stop us in the gates. Guys come over, ask us to sign. We sign the name, they don't know who we are.

WN: Chee, try do that now. (Laughs)

AB: Yeah. But which I really enjoyed. You know, seeing the games there. And I think the tickets those days were about \$7.50. Five dollars,

\$7.50 and \$10.00. Nowadays, gee, look at the tickets they're asking. Hundred, \$250, or something like that. No, like I said, they had good runners. They had Jesse Owens, Metcalf. They running 100 and 200. Then they had this other guy from Stanford. He's supposed to be the best in 440, but they brought a guy from University of Pennsylvania. He's an 880 man. He ran 440 and he beat this guy from Stanford. This guy from Stanford supposed to be the best. I can't think of his name. In 440. This guy ran 880 from Pennsylvania. He ran the 440 and that day he broke the record and beat this guy from Stanford. But like I said, we took in boxing, we took in basketball, because was all within that area in L.A.

Then they had movies. They told us to go in the show. They had the picture Rain. So, we went in with a group of Hawaiians as actors. We got fifteen bucks a day.

WN: What movie was this?

AB: Rain. Joan Crawford, Dorothy Lamour, and somebody else. All them mixed up in this, see?

WN: Dorothy Lamour?

AB: Joan Crawford, first. I don't know whether Dorothy Lamour was mixed up with us in that.

WN: So, what did you have to do?

AB: Just like the other guys. They spray you, you look kinda brown. And you run into the ocean, then come back. They had one part of the picture, we make an imu, cook the pig. After that, was all over. It's [filmed] over in Catalina Island. So, lot of local kids going to school. USC [University of Southern California] or UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles]. All come into those movies. They were asking for Hawaiians. I never seen so many Hawaiians in all my life.

(Laughter)

WN: You pass for Hawaiian?

AB: Well, no. They had to darken us a little, you know. They gave us this spray job and everything. We were making, I think, was fifteen dollars a day, which was good money.

WN: How many days did you shoot?

AB: Well, we'd shoot, maybe, four days, then rest. Then certain scenes, we go there, maybe, two days. Maybe a day and a half and all that. So, wasn't steady, what they wanted to shoot.

WN: So when you see that movie, can you see yourself in there?

AB: When I first went to see the movie, I don't know where I was in the scene. First we were in the ocean when we were swimming around and everything like that. And then, they come back. But after a while, you sit down and you watch. Then you kind of pick yourself out. But it's really hard.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, so after that, then what did you do?

AB: Well, after the movies and everything was over, then I caught the boat. Again, I caught the Monterey. Then I went to Australia for two trips. Then it came back. Then I went back to work for Iron Works. They were busy, so I happen to come back. They tell me, "Well, Alec, you want to come back in the shop?" Old Man (George) Hansen. Nice boss.

"If you want me, go ahead." So, I got off the ship, came back, work the Iron Works. Then while working in the Iron Works, we took the test to come into the firehouse.

WN: How come you took the test?

AB: Well, there was no job. Might as well take a job, you know. Chief Blaisdell says, "Hey, test coming up. You folks better go take a test." So, his son Timmy and myself, all of us, we got together, took the test. And we passed. That's when they hired us in July. First, 1933, when they opened up the Waialua Fire Station. They hired twelve men.

WN: What kind of test was that?

AB: For the fire department.

WN: I mean, you know, . . .

AB: Entrance.

WN: . . . what kind questions?

AB: Oh, they ask you about, oh, certain things. Streets. And we took the agility test. We have to lift up, climb the ladder, and all these things. Agility test. Running, too. How fast you can run, and all that stuff. High jump. So, we took the test. We got in. So, I stayed in there till I got out in 1965.

WN: So, where was the first assignment?

AB: At Kakaako Fire Station. Down with the engine company. Number nine. Then from there we went to the ladder company which was part of that building. Ladder company number one. So, we switched from engine to ladder, and in the meantime we still belong to the rescue squad. We did rescue work and all that.

WN: Was there a big difference in pay from the time you started in the fire department?

AB: Oh, yeah. Well, you started at \$135 a month. Then about, oh, I'd say about almost two years, and we got a raise of \$15 to bring us back to \$150. Because the firemen before us, they got cut ten percent of their salary. Instead of laying the men off, they cut their salary. So they were making \$150. So, they took fifteen dollars off. So, Chief Blaisdell asked me to go. I knew the guys who was sitting on the Board, you see. So, they gave us back our \$150. So, we worked for \$150. That went for about four years, and then they gave us another raise. We went in to ask for another raise. That's when the war came on. We got two raises. I think I was making \$166 when the war [World War II] came.

WN: Where were you working when the war started?

AB: I was at Palama Fire Station. Transferred over to Palama. We were down at Palama, and we were off that day. See, those days, we worked from six to six in the evening.

WN: Six a.m. to six p.m.?

AB: No. Six p.m. to six p.m. Twenty-four hours shifts. So, I was off duty that day. Then they called us back, so I went back. And then, they told me to take over the company. So, I went down to Kakaako, picked up an engine. So, I was an officer, I was an engineer. And the guys I had, (chuckles) I don't think they ever knew what a hose look like, so we had to teach 'em. So we went down to Palama. We fought two fires during that time till the guys came back from Hickam Field, see? I lost my captain, Tom Macy. And the other guys were hurt. Some of the men were hurt and all that.

WN: Where were these fires?

AB: At Hickam Field. That's when they made the raid, December 7. So we had the big engine I took up there. Then we had guys from City and County. Guys from HC&D [Hawaiian Construction and Draying Co.] You know, they brought a truck over there. We load the hose up for them. So, we took over after that. Blacked out and all that.

WN: So your captain died?

AB: Yeah, Thomas Macy. He got killed down at Hickam Field. There's one, two, three guys got shot up. But they survived.

WN: So, that captain died through gunfire or . . .

AB: Well, shrapnel. You see, they dropped the bombs and these things let go. He got killed. A fireman from Kalihi, number six, got killed; and another captain from number two, down at Central Fire Station got killed. That's the three first companies went to Hickam Field.

WN: Did you have any close calls? (While fighting a fire at Honolulu Gas Company, three Japanese planes came over us but did not drop bombs or shoot at us. They looked things over then headed back over the Pali, back to their carrier.)

AB: No. That day, only calls we had was one shrapnel hole went into the gas tank down at Iwilei. So, we went down to fight that fire. And there was another fire after that. Only two fires till the company came back from fighting the fire at Hickam Field. Then after that, we got to work, then that's when Bill Blaisdell became our captain. He was a lieutenant. Reliever lieutenant, so he came up to take Tom Macy's place. See, because on one watch you had a lieutenant. On the other watch you have a captain. Now there's all captains, no more lieutenants. So, my lieutenant was Mokulehua, nice guy.

WN: Who?

AB: Mokulehua. He's dead now. So, after that, then they start shifting us all over. I went from there to Waipahu to relieve.

WN: This is still during the war?

AB: Yeah. Then we come back. Then they start building up sub-stations. (They) built one down Iwilei. I went down to be an officer there. And from Iwilei, I went to (King) and (Liliha). The corner right there. They had a (sub-)station in there (next to an old garage). You know, right across the triangle there was an old Kobayashi Hotel. There was a big house there. About three bedrooms. That was a fire station. Then I went to (another) station up at a teahouse, up on Makanani Drive.

WN: Oh, Natsunoya?

AB: Yeah, Natsunoya (Teahouse).

WN: Oh, they had a station up there?

AB: Yeah, they had a fire station. Emergency fire station. I was in charge of that for about two years, then it (reverted) back (to a teahouse). They did away with the (station), but they wanted to keep two men there, see? So, go back to Liliha and King. Then, they did away with Liliha and King. I went back to Iwilei (Station). Then after that, then I went from Iwilei to Kalihi Fire Station.

WN: The one by. . . .

AB: On King and. . . . Right by Farrington School. I stayed there thirteen years. Because I only lived the block above, eh?

WN: You said that you were also Oahu Civilian Defense? OCD?

AB: No, the OCD, they had OCD guys there (at Iwilei and a few other stations), you see. So, we worked under the OCD (during the war). Local Civil Defense. You see, they (OCD) paid the (salaries of the firemen at these sub-stations at that time). Our trucks were not red--all green.

WN: Green?

AB: Yeah. And down Iwilei we had two big engines there. So, that was the biggest company. They had eight men working under me. Me and Timmy Blaisdell were in charge of the station. So, that was the biggest company, the Iwilei station. Even though they had the Coast Guard stations down there, too, on Awa Street. And they had one further down on the roadway. Then they (OCD) built another (sub-station at Kalihi Kai near) Libby Cannery. So, that became Kalihi-Kai Station. So, that took care all the waterfront and everything like that. Yeah, so I stayed with the Kalihi (station). Then, I went to number four, which was Palama, to be in charge of the truck company. So, from Palama, we went up to Kuakini Street. That's when I got hurt and then I went out in '65.

WN: How did you get hurt?

AB: A fireman sliding down the pole. I happened to be caught underneath. See, because I figure they were all down already. But (my tillerman) was in the shower and never heard the first alarm (until) he turned the shower off. Then they (started) calling the truck company. He was my tillerman, the guy (who) steers the back. I just happen to back down when he came down the pole (and) gave me one crack on the neck. We went to this false alarm down at Mayor Wright Housing. We come back. The next morning, I couldn't turn my head. And so, from then on, I went for treatments and they finally told me, "You can go out on disability." So I went out. I (didn't) retire till May '67. I took all my sick leave and stuff. They were trying to treat me. Feel if I could come back. I couldn't bend over too good. So, they told me, "If you want to go out, you go out." So, I went out in '67.

WN: How has the fire department changed since the time you started till now?

AB: Oh, bigger now. They make more money. (Chuckles)

WN: You guys didn't have a union at the early time, eh?

AB: We had a union (that) we started. I worked for the union. With the union, we had to work with the City and County and the Legislature. See, Charley Kendall was in charge of HGEA [Hawaii Government Employees Association], and he said, "You, Alec, (be a representative for) the fire department," and (Carvalho for) the police department (representative). We sat down with him. He couldn't (only) help us and (not) help the rest of the guys in the other departments in the City and County or the State. So, that's when we formed a union. Just to take care (of the fire department. That's when) he could help us. (But) now, the union (has an office of its own). More powerful now. (Before that, whenever) we needed (something), we (would) have to see the Board of Supervisors or the Legislature ourselves).

WN: So, actually, you helped? You started the thing?

AB: Yeah, we worked. I worked.

WN: When was this?

AB: When was it? Was [nineteen] thirty-something. I really don't know. (It started in 1933.)

WN: That long ago?

AB: Yeah, I think, was [nineteen] thirty because . . .

WN: You started in '33, yeah?

AB: Yeah, see, the war started '41. I mean, to say offhand, it's pretty hard. Because, yeah, I was at Palama. That's before the war.

WN: Palama?

AB: Yeah, Palama Station number four. I was there when they started. Charley Kendall, they formed the HGEA. He was the boy that was in charge.

WN: You got married in 1948, yeah?

AB: Yeah, '48.

WN: How did you meet your wife?

AB: Well, those days, we used to (row), eh? We had (boat) races. Barges. So I used to row for Healan way back. Take crew, all that. Then the racing. We form a club within the firehouse to race in the barges on September Regatta Day. In September and in July 4th, we go to Hilo Regatta. See, those are the two big days. July 4th in Hilo and the middle, the second (Saturday) of September. They'd have it in the harbor. So, well the girl's crew came over there to row. So, that's where I met her. And even though she

stayed up Kalihi, but above me on Kalihi Street.

WN: She's Kalihi girl?

AB: No, she's from (School Street near Kauluwela School). From School Street, up on Kauluwela side. She's from Frog Lane. The name is still that. And within there, the whole family had the property in Frog Lane and all that place. The grandfather and grandmother had quite a bit of property in there.

WN: The father is the picture that you just gave me?

AB: Yeah. But her grandfather's side was from the Robinsons and all that, you see.

WN: When you say "rowing barges," what is a barge?

AB: Well, those days, we had a rowing barge. It's different than a canoe. Sometimes you see 'em in London going up the river like that. They're all six men. And they're all with their long oars. We call 'em barges those days. So, there's six-man or they have a four-man or two-man barge race. Scull racing, they call it, one-man, eh? That was the way it worked, so we call 'em barges. They were built by this guy Peacock in Seattle. So, they made all these barges. Just for racing. So, those were the days we (rowed) down at the piers. (The station was at) the pier then (because) they (were) building the new station at Fort and Beretania. That's where we were training. Rowing and everything like that. So, they brought in the girls to row and stuff there. Firemen's daughters. We had firemen's kids rowing in novice and kid crew, and all that. So was a good mix, you know, in the rowing. We'd go to Hilo, we come back. Race here, then we'd go to Kauai, then come back. So, those were the old days. Because the boathouse used to be across Honolulu Iron Works where Inter-Island (drydock) pier. It's where Pier 1 and 2 (are now). The Inter-Island Steamship Company (across the street from Honolulu Iron Works, Piers 3 and 4 used to be the old rowing place. They had bleachers put up and people would stand and cheer as the rowers went by. It was a big thing then!)

WN: Not Keehi Lagoon?

AB: No, no. Where the Coast Guard Station (was), right alongside they had a big boathouse for the Myrtles and the Healani. And for the women, Honolulu Girl's and the Kunalu Girls. They had two women's (boat clubs) and they had two men's (boat clubs). Myrtle and Healani. Till the police came in (and formed a club). Then Kauai had one group. Hilo had their own. So, that was our old boathouse. I worked at Iron Works (and) used to go from work over (to the club to) swim and row.

WN: Sounds like good fun.

AB: Yeah. Those were the fun days, you know.

WN: Besides paddling, did you do anything else? Any kind recreation while you were fire department?

AB: Well, what we played was fast ball in the fire department. But I played for Palama volleyball, fast ball, and track. And then, McKinley, I was in track, too. I didn't go too much for basketball, I don't know why. Baseball, I didn't like it.

WN: So, all the time you were working fire department and everything, you were living in Kalihi?

AB: Yeah.

WN: Kaili and Beckley?

AB: Yeah, I was living there. See, it was still a family estate, so we bought one another out. In other words, divide it in three parcels. So I bought one from my sister. My brother gave his share to my other sister. Then my other brother bought (from) my sister. So, that was the family plot, which we bought and built up.

WN: So you still own it now?

AB: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Who lives there now?

AB: I have a son that's living there. And, I mean, friends of mine. My next-door neighbor (moved into one of my houses) when they (tore down the) old house and the mother sold the place. That's just makai of my place. Yeah, my son, my oldest boy is up there.

WN: The value of that property over there has gone up, yeah?

AB: Oh, (chuckles). But it's not this much as far as tax value is concerned. You see? But up there has gone, like Yim Lum that was with us, Thundering Herd, he sold his place. And his place was just across the exchange on Kaili Street. You know, the telephone exchange? I think he sold his lot. Only the lot with an old house, \$140,000.

WN: Who's buying land in Kalihi nowadays?

AB: Mostly Filipinos. They got the money. They buy. They give you the price. No squabble whatsoever. And lot of them are not local Filipinos. It's the ones that's coming in [from the Philippines]. They come ask me couple of times. I tell 'em, "No. I bought this. I'm satisfied. I have boys," I said. So, I have three boys. This place, that up Kalihi, and the one down on Makaua.

WN: Oh, you have another place?

AB: Yeah.

WN: Where is this?

AB: Makaua. That's between Kahana and Kaaawa. (It was my wife's family property, the Kahalewai family.)

WN: Oh, you own land up there, too?

AB: Yeah, I have a house down there. Go down there and build down there and stuff. We go down once in a while.

WN: Tell me, that Beckley Street, that's not named after your family?

AB: No, no.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

AB: . . . Street was named after this English people. See, I think the Beckley married into the Nakuina family. They own all majority of that property up at Kalihi before. Nakuina Estate. There was a street named after Nakuina. Then Beckley. That was named after the Beckley family. They had quite a bit of property. They went up into the valley.

WN: So, no relation to you folks?

AB: No, no relation.

WN: The reason why I ask, because there's a Farr Lane, eh? Then I know the Farr . . .

AB: The Farr family, yeah. The Farr family had a property in the back of the Wallaces. Wallaces were across. They all had big, maybe, one-acre lots. And the Farris were in the back. Their property is in the back, so that's why Farr Lane was named after them. Off of Beckley into Farr Lane. See, before, the Schnacks used to own all (of that). Dr. Schnack, his brother--attorney Schnack.

WN: Schnack?

AB: S-C-H-N-A-C-K, I think. It was a Dr. Schnack and the other brother was an attorney. So they owned from Kalihi, Beckley, up Farr Lane, all the way in back up to the Kamehameha Field. That was all under them. And then, they sold some of the lots. Smythes owned (property on Beckley near Farr Lane). You know this Mabel Smythe? The mother and father lived up there.

WN: These families are all part-Hawaiian?

AB: Oh, yeah, (except the Schnacks).

WN: I noticed that lot of part-Hawaiian families lived in that area.

AB: Yeah, oh, lot of them.

WN: How come?

AB: Well, they moved in. You see, like the Cluneys lived across us. They were part-Hawaiian. And she had a little money. Then the McVeighs next to me were part-Hawaiian. She was a Meyer from Molokai. Then, what else they had? Oh, they had a Portuguese family below-- Paschoal. Then they had another Hawaiian family, the Keliikoas. The Moss family. My relation, the McClellans. They're all half-Whites. Gladys Brandt, I knew her. She was right across the exchange. She was raised there (and her brother, Don Ainoa).

WN: Did you folks get together a lot as a . . .

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah. We got, like her brother and all that. Well, we all played sports in there, see. Like I played volleyball for Palama Settlement. We won (the) championship. We had one of the best teams one year. Like I said, well, we all meet one another and you all know one another, so that's how we got along.

WN: Were there any Japanese or Chinese in that area?

AB: They had Chinese. We had Chinese family. We had half-Whites. No, no Japanese on that street. I'm trying to think all the way down. No, they had Kamaunu family. Billy Boggs used to be an old-time fighter.

WN: Billy who?

AB: Boggs. B-O-G-G-S. He's Kalihi boy. Oh, he was good welterweight. No, I'm trying to think in the first Hani Lane. I was trying to figure. No, no Japanese. They had Portuguese. Makai side of King Street, like Kopke, you had some. You had some around that area, but around where we at, there were no Japanese. Most Japanese were down Kamehameha IV Road. See, they had piggeries and all that stuff. They worked for the old bone meal, we used to call that. That's the fertilizer company. It was on Middle Street and King.

WN: Oh, near the Yamane?

AB: Past the Yamanes.

WN: Was that Pacific Guano?

AB: Pacific Guano [and Fertilizer Company]. They had that whole area, you see. That's where all the Japanese lived around there. Lived up the street, see?

WN: Where did the Chinese live?

AB: Oh, you had Hiram Fong and them, they lived down on King Street, right past the Yamanes. They had the family there. Then they had the Lloyds, then they had another Chinese family. (Akiona) Lum, he lived on Kopke Street. His family lived further down on Kopke. Industrial. Lot of Chinese. See, maybe one or two Japanese. But there was a mixture. And there are lot of half-Whites, too. Kanae family and all that. Kanae family, that's well known family around there.

WN: Big Head Kanae?

AB: Yeah. His father. Then he moved down Palama, but old Frank Kanae was another rugged old man. His family stayed there before. All around that street.

WN: On Beckley Street, there's that Mormon church now.

AB: Yeah.

WN: When did they buy the land? Or how did they get the land?

AB: Well, that Mormon church used to belong to the Dreier Estate. And that Dreier Estate was part-owner of the Oahu Ice. August Dreier. And they were part-owners of the Oahu Ice. You know, big place down on Kapiolani Boulevard. And the Mutch family (were also part owners). Then the Mormon church bought (the Beckley Street property) from them. (There was) a big home (on the property) used for (the elders to stay in. Mr. Waddoups was the head of the Mormon Church then. His son Thomas Waddoups is an old-time lawyer in Honolulu. Waddoups. Tom Waddoups. He's a good Mormon. So, then they had that property. Then the church bought it from them. Because the Mormons had a big church on Lusitania Street, you see. So they bought over there, and they figure, build one of the churches there. So that's when they built up this big church. All the labor and everything was all the members of the church. Then they built a recreation center along, and then they built this other house to help, you know, the poor.

WN: Prior to that, when the Dreier Estate and the Mutch family owned the land, what was there?

AB: Was only a big house. Had a barn. They had swimming pool. That's all. Was a family house there. Was a big area there. Then next to them was C.J. Day. He used to own a store on Fort Street.

WN: C.J. . . .

AB: Day. D-A-Y. I think he has one son yet. They own(ed property) next to (the Mutchs on Beckley St.) And he was a church man. And then he had the C.J. Day Store on Fort Street. They sold special

goods from England and all that. (A very fancy store.) (The Days) sold (their property) and some subdivider bought it and cut it up (for) homes. Then next to that was the old Hopkins family. All from Kalihi. Charlie Hopkins. He's another guy you ought to go see, too.

WN: Hopkins?

AB: Yeah. He's on 1018 Kalihi Street. When you call him up, you tell him I told you to go see him. Charlie Hopkins. So, he can give you reminisce, some of that. They own the whole place there. Then next to where the fire station was the Prendergasts and, well, they . . .

WN: It's on King Street, eh?

AB: On King Street. The corner, King and Harvey Lane. And next to them, it was this family. I forget the family that owned that house. Rest was Hawaiians around there.

WN: So, that area had lot of part-Hawaiians, yeah?

AB: Oh, yeah. Plenty part-Hawaiians. We had captains from the Inter-Island Boats up there. Three of them. One was Old Man Captain Pai, P-A-I. Then they had Captain Naopala. Wait, wait. Not Naopala. Captain. . . . Yeah, Naopala. Naopala Lane. They have the lane up there. The captain was Captain Self. They were all three captains on the Inter-Island boat.

WN: Oh, that's how you get Self Lane?

AB: Yeah, Self Lane. See? Naopala Lane was after this captain. Then (Captain) Pai stayed in Harvey Lane. Then Old Man Captain Loncke, he lived on Houghtailing.

WN: Loncke?

AB: Yeah. He was a captain on the Inter(-Island boat Haleakala). Captain Loncke. They had four captains up there. Then they had another one further down. I can't think of his name.

WN: Did the families ever get together for anything?

AB: Oh, they had parties, luaus, and stuff like that. You know, like any community. You had luau, you invite everybody around. You know. That's all. Outside of that, community wise, the old days, wasn't too much.

WN: Any Whites lived over there? Pure White?

AB: Oh, yeah. We had the Watt family there. They were haoles. Married a half-White. Had Schlemmers, they were Germans. Schlemmer family.

Was seventeen in that family. And they were right where the highway is now on Gulick Avenue. They had a big home there, about acre, acre and a half. Yeah, all German family, Schlemmers. Further up, they had another White family was Trevenens. They all lived around there. Quite a few haoles there. There was a mixture there, you know. Plenty. Like Gertz, too. Another German family. They all Whites, (including the Dreiers and the Mutchs).

WN: What kind of work did they do?

AB: Well, like Old Man Schlemmer, he was with the H.H. Hackfeld. I don't know what kind of job he had down there. Trevenen family, they were schoolteachers. Then they had the Weatherwax, they work for Hawaiian Electric and all that. They were all in, you know, certain jobs they had there. Oh, there's quite a few half-Whites around there (because of inter-marriages). Plenty half-Whites there. Dement Street, they had a Dement family there. Then they had Dela Cruz family. Then they had Duvauchelle family further up. Then on the other side, they had the Lopeses.

WN: This is all in that area of Beckley?

AB: No, no. That's all above. All by the stream and all that. What I'm talking about is the guys on Gulick Avenue. And then, like the Isaacs, they were on that street, you see.

WN: They were on Kealoha, I think.

AB: No, not Kealoha. They on Lohilani, I think. That family was there. Then they had half-White families. They had another haole family next to him. Then they had some Japanese move in there. Kodama, right where he's at. See, the haoles, from there, they moved out. Like I said, Kaimuki wasn't built then. So they moved. Some of them moved to Manoa and places like that. But they had the people down on Gulick Avenue. All haoles.

WN: Why did they move out?

AB: Well, they sold. Some went to the outside islands. Some went away. Some moved different places. Because all on Gulick Avenue was mostly taro patches way back. Till they start filling in and building houses. Yeah, then you go down to, like on King Street where Hiram Fong and all that, they had the Joseph family, they had the Richards family, Phillips family, all those guys all lived alongside. Martin, Peter Martin, his family. Robero family. All live around Kamehameha IV Road. Like what's his name? He just made circuit judge. What the heck his name? Short guy. He was with the House for a long time. He was chairman.

WN: Oh, Wakatsuki?

AB: Wakatsuki. He's from there. Yeah, they all from that district, see.

WN: So, how has Kalihi changed from the time you were growing up till now?

AB: Oh, it changed a heck of a lot. (Laughs)

WN: Like how?

AB: Well, you see, where I was, mostly community family. Then after a while, they opened up a little business here. Then right after that, well, then they move out to different areas. You know, bigger property and things like that. But then the business move in and they took over quite a bit. I think, like Foodland, and HC&D opened up below that. Hawaiian Tel opened up, too, big place in there, see. And like where the Kalihi Union Church, the church used to be on Mokauea and Puuhale, that triangle lot there. That used to be the church over there. See, next to what we used to call Star Theater on Puuhale and King. The Kalihi Union [Church] was on the triangle lot, Puuhale and Mokauea. It went down for about 200 yards. Till it moved to King Street. Because bigger lot, see? The Lloyds had a bigger lot next to Central Union and I can't think of that name that goes in there. Oh, they had almost two acres in there. So they sold. Was too big, eh? They sold, moved different places. All above was all taro patches plus pigpens and all that, above School Street.

WN: Above School?

AB: Yeah.

WN: The foot of the valley, then.

AB: Yeah, that's the foot of the valley. School Street up was all going into Kalihi Valley. Kamehameha IV Road was still pigpens. So now you see all the housings and everything up there.

WN: How about the people? How was the people different?

AB: Oh, well, it's hard. Everybody got along with everybody up there, you know. I mean, the old days. There was no hatred whatsoever. Whether you Japanese, Chinese, or dark Portuguese. Everybody treated everybody alike, you know. We got along. We got along with everybody around there. There was no problem. Yeah, we had old E.K. Fernandez. Anything we want, he was in the House of Representatives. If he fight (chuckles) we get it up Kalihi. Yeah, man, E.K. Fernandez he was a movie man. So, like you said, it's hard. I mean, some of them moved out this way. Some moved up Makiki. You know, bigger place. And they got out of there.

WN: So, you moved here [Kahala] in '65, eh?

AB: Yeah. I bought in '65. The early part of '65. And the funny part, this place I bought, this guy's name was Beckley, too.

WN: The place you bought . . .

AB: Right here.

WN: . . . from this person?

AB: This person was Beckley. And he lived up Kalihi.

WN: Yeah, but not . . .

AB: I don't know if he's ever related to this other Beckley. His brother used to be a pro down Mid-Pacific Golf Club. Alec Beckley. Well, this is the brother. He worked for HC&D. Then he married a German girl from Honokaa--Freudenberg, or something like that. Then he sold and he went away. Because his daughter and son were away. When he came back, he said, "Chee, kind of sorry." Because when he come back, the price of land went up, eh? Because when we bought here, we bought only the house. Our lease . . .

WN: This was Bishop before? Bishop Estate?

AB: Yeah. You couldn't buy. It was all lease. Lease, we were paying \$315 a year till they gave us chance to buy.

WN: What are your feelings about Kalihi?

AB: Still my aloha is there. You know, we sit down, reminisce. They call it a ghetto, but that's the best ghetto we like.

(Laughter)

AB: You know, because you had Kalihi and Palama. Then you had Kakaako. Those were all the rivals still that went to School Street, eh? The Hui Elehu gang. We had no problem. When they play football, we all fight and everything. But all in all, you still aloha. You know, when you think, and you see, you go back. Oh, lot of millionaires from there. From the ghetto went out and they made money. Fong was one of them. Furtado, he made money. What little I have, why (chuckles). . . .

WN: They consider Kalihi a tough place or a . . .

AB: No, no, no. You know, sure, we going get in a fight. Gang fight, we going to fight, eh? But we never had problems. We never had robberies. Nobody stole from anybody over there. Of course, you going get in a fight, that stuff. Sure, you got to stick with your gang. You fight, you fight, eh? Us, Palama gang, we fought. We

fought Kakaako, too. So, these are the things you had. Like Punchbowl, they had their (Portuguese). They had Olympic gang, so that's all. But Kalihi was never tough. Not tough. You know, nobody come in and rob your house or anything like that, no. Never come.

WN: You proud to say that you from Kalihi?

AB: Yes. I'm proud to say. I told the guys, "I don't give a damn who you are, but I still (chuckles) say I'm proud I came from Kalihi." Same thing you ask everybody. They say, "We came from the ghettos, we still happy." You ask Hiram Fong, he tell, "Yeah. I'm a Kalihi boy." Well, Jack Burns . . .

WN: Even our governor says that.

AB: Yeah, yeah. Jack Burns the same way. He say, "I wasn't born in Kalihi, but I had children in Kalihi." He said, "I was brought up with this gang here." Cullen family and all the half-Whites around Kamehameha IV Road. See, they had their own gang up there, too. They had good athletes up there. Ducky Swann, his brother, and all them. Swann was an all-around, before, St. Louis. Ducky Swann, then he went to Dayton [University]. But Mack McColgan, he was from Palama. So, all that gang. We all come back. When we sit down, you choke, you know (chuckles), talk about Kalihi. The Isaacs family. They were all good families there. And like I said, there was no hatred, whatsoever. No. We all liked and loved each other. Yeah. So, like you say, when a guy tell you, still say I'm from Kalihi. I told my kids, "You were born in Kalihi. So it's up to you folks."

But they say, "Oh, now, Daddy, tough to go back."

I said, "This is a different crowd." It's a different crowd. The crowd we had, no. Like I said, you want anything, you want the mangoes, you go in there, ask. They tell you, "Okay. Help yourself." Nobody stole. Yeah, we had good athletes that came out of that area. When I say we had nothing, I don't mean money or anything like that. But what life we went through, we enjoyed it. We enjoyed it. Nowadays, these kids need money for everything. Shee, you got nickel, brother, you rich.

(Laughter)

WN: Yeah, well, times changed, eh?

AB: Oh, times have changed. Really have changed. I mean, when you sit down and reminisce, it's hard to compare those days, you know. Like I said, when we worked for Iron Works, we were getting half a dollar an hour. The same guys are getting eight, nine, ten dollars now. The same thing like in the fire house. They start at \$12,000. I was only making \$10,850 as a captain, senior captain. And you know for yourself, look at the salary they make. Now kids make good

salary. But I told them, "With what money I had, I invest a little," I said. "I'm proud to say of what I have today. But you guys, the money you make, you got nothing. You cannot buy." You know for yourself. You go down and sit down, they want \$250,000. What the hell is \$250,000? But if you want it, take it or leave it.

WN: Well, okay. I'm going to turn off the tape. Any last things you want to say?

AB: No, nothing. I want to thank you.

WN: Yeah, well, thank you very much for your time.

AB: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

KALIHI: **Place of Transition**

Vol. I

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HISTORY PROJECT**

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